DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 273 602 SP 027 961

AUTHOR Chang, Moon K.
TITLE Effective Programming for Student Teachers in Special Education.
PUB DATE Oct 85
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the National Conference of the Society of Educators and Scholars (10th, Teaneck, NJ, October 4-5, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Education Courses; *Education Majors; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Program Improvement; Special Education; *Special Education Teachers; Teacher Education Curriculum; *Teacher Education Programs; Teaching Experience

ABSTRACT

Existing four-year teacher preparation programs for special education teachers can be improved in several ways through adjustments to the current curricular and experiential requirements. General and liberal education courses should be required and spread out over the entire undergraduate years (rather than concentrating such courses into the freshman year). During the freshman year, students should take courses in study skills, how to read research studies, and categories of exceptionalities. During the sophomore year, students must begin taking courses in their subject specialization, and then take curriculum and methods courses along with theory courses during the junior year. Adding more courses to an already overcrowded curriculum is not effective, but restructuring present courses may be. Mini-courses within a large course could be arranged for intensive study of a certain topic. In terms of teaching experience, freshman year students should begin visiting both regular and special education classes, and should begin participating in classroom teaching by their sophomore year. Simulation laboratories would provide good experience for the student teachers, who should be supervised by competent faculty and classroom teachers. Student competence must be measured throughout the teacher preparation program. (CB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED273602

Effective programming for student teachers in special education

Moon K. Chang

Peru State College

P. O. Box 224

Peru, Nebraska 68421

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. K. Chang

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP 027 961

Running head: STUDENT TEACHERS

Effective programming for

student teachers in special education*

The purpose of this paper is to suggest some idea to improve special teacher education programs. Studies show that graduates and school districts alike tend to express dissatisfaction with much of the content of special education programs (Yarger & Mertens, 1980). From inside and outside, teacher education in general and special education in specific are under attack for three reasons. The first reason is that education majors are weak in knowledge of basic skills. It is reported that a significant number of teachers could not pass basic skills tests for certification. In Georgia, for example, 87 percent of the white teachers passed that state's teacher competency test on the first try, compared with 34 percent of the black teachers. In California, 76 percent of whites, 39 percent of Hispanics, and 26 percent of blacks passed that state's basic skills test ("More Blacks," 1985).

The second reason why teacher education is under attack is that education majors are weak in knowledge of subject matter. According to the Southern Regional Education Board, students who major in elementary education take fewer hours in English and Mathematics combined than do their peers who major in arts and sciences, although they are the two areas to which they will give

---

*Paper presented at the 10th National Conference of the Society of Educators and Scholars at Fairleigh Dickinson University, October 4-5, 1985.

the greatest attention in the elementary grade. According to the same report, only 22 percent of the math courses that education students take can be called college-level, compared with 53 percent of those taken by arts and science students. This study was conducted based on the examination of the college transcripts of 3,283 education graduates and 2,760 arts and science graduates of 17 major colleges and universities in the South ("Education Majors," 1985).

The third reason why teacher education is under attack is that education majors do not demonstrate satisfactorily teaching competence of pedagogical skills. According to Harris Poll of American Educators, half of the respondents (1,981 teachers polled) say that current methods of training do not adequately prepare teachers for the classroom ("Teachers Ready," 1984).

Whether it is justified or not, teacher education institutions are getting much of the blame for the reported poor quality of teachers. It seems necessary to make changes in order to upgrade the existing teacher education programs in general and special education programs in specific. Various ideas have been suggested to improve the teacher education. Proposals vary widely from more education (such as a 5-year plan) to "alternative route to certification." However, by instituting some changes and adjustments in the curricular and experiential requirements in addition to qualifying exams the existing 4-year special teacher education

programs could be effectively rejuvenated. Here are some specific suggestions.

General Education

1. General and liberal education courses must be spreaded out over the entire undergraduate years rather than concentrating during the freshman year. As an individual matures general and liberal education may be more appreciated. The ultimate value of liberal arts education is that it makes people discontented with imperfection and it inspires people to develop the potentiality of the unique individuals as a "whole person" (Gregory, 1982).
2. During the freshman year students should take courses in study skills, how to read research studies, and categories of exceptionalities. Since today's knowledge may be found absolete tomorrow, student teachers must develop ability and competence to keep up with, absorb, and apply relevant research findings for their own learning and for future classroom use.

Subject Specialization and Professional Education

1. During the sophomore year students are required to take enough number of courses of their subject specialization and during the junior year students are required to take curriculum and methods courses along with theory courses.

2. Adding more courses to already over crowded curriculum is not a good idea. Structural changes must be made in each course. One example is to develop intensive mini courses --such as one-, two-, or three-week courses--based on the content. A task analysis may be needed in order to create a number of interrelated but independent courses. Advantages of developing intensive mini courses are many. First, waste of instructional time can be minimized. When time and the scope of a topic are limited chances are that major points of the course would be stressed rather than discussing related but not essential elements of the topic. What is important is not how many hours students sit in the classroom but how much time can be actually utilized on the subject being discussed by the faculty and the students. Second, intensive mini courses may be more attractive and convenient particularly to those who wish to obtain information on a single topic in a limited time. Third, if sufficient number of excellent intensive mini courses can be developed, they will meet the needs of diversified population. Potential course takers might include public school teachers, parents, qualified teachers who are not currently teaching, and people who wish to make mid-career changes into teaching.

Field Experience

1. During the first year students will be visiting both regular and special classes. They will get first hand feel about the children. During the sophomore year students will be exposed to the regular classroom settings more in specific. They will be having various opportunities to get acquainted with daily routines, observation methods, and teaching methods of the regular teachers. They will do the practicum half-day. During the junior year students do the practicum half-day only in special education settings. During the senior year students will do student teaching full-day during the first semester and half-day during the second semester in special education settings. Student teaching must be viewed as opportunities for students to apply acquired skills in school settings while receiving frequent feedback. In this way, adequate field-based experience can be provided to the teacher candidates througout their training period in such a way that they will have opportunities of assessing their suitability to teaching profession as well and of receiving assistance for improving themselves.
2. Whether the tutorial programs are better than the apprenticeship programs is a controversial one. However, one particular type of program may not deal with the fundamental

issues. Research indicates that the importance of the field-based programs lies primarily in their success at placing student teachers in a realistic teaching context regardless of the program type and the amount of time that the student teachers spend on activities which are meaningful to them (Cervett & Dellow, 1980). Simply increasing number of hours of field-based experience is easy but will not do much good to the student teachers.

3. Redefine the field experience so that the concept of simulation laboratories can be accommodated. Simulation laboratories equipped with computer-driven videodisk which would provide realistic field experiences are known to have greater reliability and quality and program control. Model student teaching experiences can be created with little or no difficulties (Marker, 1984).
4. Field experience should be supervised by competent faculty and competent classroom teachers. Competency criteria must include subject matter knowledge, successful teaching experience in specific areas, pedagogical skills, and human relations skills. Teacher preparation institutions and the state departments of education must ensure that the college supervisors and cooperating teachers have qualifications according to the specific criteria established.

On-going activities and programs for upgrading competence of the supervising individuals must be provided timely. The state department of education must review periodically the programs of each institution in its own state so that those institutions that do not meet the established criteria should be advised either to stop training student teachers or to do something to make up the deficiences.

Measuring Student Competence

1. During the first semester of junior year students will be required to take a qualifying exam in subject specialization. During the first semester of the senior year students will take another qualifying exam in professional education. Two types of tests will be used: a paper-pencil test (both essay and multiple choice types) and a live performance of teaching skills. In addition, the accumulated records of performance on simulation laboratories will be utilized as part of evaluation.
2. The assumption underlying student teacher field experience evaluation is that evalation data will be used to improve teaching behaviors; however, evaluative data are seldom used as the basis for diagnosis and remediation by the college supervisors (Warger & Aldinger, 1984). This situation must be corrected, although there are difficulties.

In order to improve this situation, institutions and the state department of education must clearly define the rights and responsibilities of the college supervisor. Measuring performance of student teachers is not easy; there are problems with evaluators and evaluation instruments. However, by instituting a combination of low-inference and high-inference evaluations this situation may be significantly remediated. Low-inference observation generally involves recording the occurrence of specific teaching behaviors; and high-inference observation requires the rater to make a qualitative judgment about teaching behaviors (Wiersma & Gibney, 1985).

3. By passing a national teacher licensing exam during the senior year students will be certified.

The suggestions listed above were based on the following assumptions:

Assumption 1. States can reach a consensus of teaching certification standards. Teacher certification, as Emily Feistritzer put it, is "a mess": no two states use the same criteria ("Only Top," 1984). Some states are making even more confusion by issuing substandard, limited, or emergency teaching certificates to those who lack bachelor's degrees ("Up to Half," 1984). A simplified

standardized process including proficiency test conducted by a national board consisted of state representatives must be developed to certify the teachers. Presently no two states are using the same test. Tests very considerably in the number of assessments, areas covered, and testing time, and therefore, to say a teacher in one state or district is qualified as another may be impossible because of the diversity of tests used ("Problems with Testing," 1985). Since certification and program approval standards should continue to be state responsibilities and the education is primarily a state function, creating a national board consisted of representatives of each state will insure that the responsibilities for teacher education will remain with each state. When the standards become uniform throughout the country the cerficication process will be simplified. A licensing exam can be administered by a national board and the scores obtained from the exam will be recognized by all teacher education institutions and state boards of education. An applicant who passes the national exam will be issued a certificate and with this certificate the applicant should be permitted to teach anywhere in the United States and its territories. The teacher also should be able to move one state to another without losing teaching credits and benefits.

Assumption 2. States can reach a consensus of what their educational objectives are so that curricula can be restructured

Assumption 4. Teacher's pay will never be competitive with private industry. The reason is that industry is engaged in money-making business while the schools are non-profit and tax-supported, depend also on revenues and contributions from private sectors. However, teachers should be compensated adequately for their work. A majority of college freshmen (71.1 percent) survey indicates that becoming financially well-off is one of their most crucial objectives ("College Freshmen," 1985).

Assumption 5. Each state must ensure the quality of its own institutions of higher education from which teachers are trained. Quality control must be done periodically and deficiences must be remediated. It is sad if what Emily Feistritzer said in her report, "The Making of a Teacher: A Report on Teacher Education and Certification" that there were too many schools in this country "where you can show up with a high school diploma and a checkbook and come out with a bachelor's degree in education" is true ("Only Top," 1984).

References

Cervett, M.J., & Dellow, D.A. (1980). Field experiences for teacher candidates: A comparison between tutorial and apprenticeship programs on student activities and attitudes. Journal of Teacher Education, 31, 57-61.

College freshmen aspire to wealth rather than a meaningful life. (1985, January). Report on Education Research, p. 5.

Education can't improve without standards for quality. (1985, July). Report on Education Research, pp. 8, 9.

Education majors lack solid coursework, says new SREB study. (1985, July). Report on Education Research, p. 8.

Gregory, M.W. (1982). Liberal education, human development, and social vision. Journal of General Education, 34, 143-157.

Marker, G.W. (1984). The new crises: Teacher education responds. Educational Horizons, 62, 55-59.

More blacks fail tests. (1985, February). Report on Education Research, p. 3.

Only top teacher education schools should survive, report says. (1984, September). Report on Education Research, pp. 1, 2.

Problems with testing. (1985, June). Education USA, p. 323.

Southern policymakers weigh college student achievement tests. (1984, July). Report on Education Research, pp. 5, 6.

Teachers ready for reform, Harris Poll says. (1984, July). Report on Education Research, p. 8.

Up to half of teacher-education programs should be closed, critic says. (1984, September). Chronicle of Higher Education , p. 19.

Warger, C.L., & Aldinger, L.E. (1984). Improving student teacher supervision: The preservice consultation model. Teacher Education and Special Education, 7, 155-163.

Wiersma, W., & Giney, T. (1985). Observation as an approach to measuring teacher competency. Action in Teacher Education, 7, 59-67.

Yarger, S.J., & Mertens, S.K. (1980). Testing the waters of school based teacher education. In D.C. Corrigan & K.R. Howey (Eds.). Special education in transition: Concepts to guide the education of experienced teachers. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.